

*I.R. Task Force*STEVEN A. THOMPSON
DIRECTORDAVID WALTERS
GOVERNORSTATE OF OKLAHOMA
OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF POLLUTION CONTROLFOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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John Fyfe
Kelly
GOVERNOR'S ILLINOIS RIVER TASK FORCE MEETS IN TAHLEQUAH

Riding into the tailwind of the Supreme Court ruling on Arkansas' Illinois River appeal, **Governor Walter's** Illinois River Task Force met in Tahlequah to discuss development of coordination projects, comprehensive water monitoring plans, and special national monitoring project funds within the Illinois River Basin. The Task Force was originally created under Governor Nigh's administration to coordinate monitoring and pollution control activities relating to the Illinois River and Lake Tenkiller. **Governor David Walters** reactivated the Task Force in June to continue in the protection and preservation of the free flowing streams of Oklahoma's most scenic river. According to **Brita Cantrell**, Assistant Attorney General and Task Force member, "Our Scenic Rivers are one of the best things that our state has to offer its people. I think the Illinois River should be considered one of the State's greatest assets and not just a mere playground. The people of Oklahoma have clamored to protect their Scenic Rivers because they are invaluable".

While in session, the Task Force voted to direct its Water Quality Data Monitoring Sub Committee to compile, expand and update a research directory which would provide a listing of all research studies and data collected in the Illinois River Basin within the last 15 years. This directory will be made available upon completion through the **Department of Pollution Control**. The Task Force was also briefed by **John Hassell**, Oklahoma Conservation Commission, regarding Special National Monitoring Project Funds designated for the Illinois River Watershed. Mr. Hassell reported that **\$250,000.00** had been allocated to Oklahoma by the **Environmental Protection Agency** for watershed monitoring and Best Management Practices implementation. "The selection of this area as an EPA Region 6 Special National Monitoring Project will allow current watershed monitoring programs to be continued, and expanded in scope, to include additional parameters and sites" stated Hassell. **Julian Fite**, counsel for **Save the Illinois River (STIR)**, stated that "programs of this nature and that of the Sub Committee will help to provide a clear cut picture of the water quality of the Illinois River. The loss in the Supreme Court was due to a lack of documented facts concerning the water quality of the River. Oklahoma needs to establish a current, clear, concise and complete definition of the River's quality so that future impact upon the River can be measured." **Karl Ahlgren**, **Senator Don Nickles** office, stated that "the State of Arkansas is concerned about the Illinois River as well and that **Senator Nickles** and **Senator Bumpers** were both working to establish a cooperative effort between the two States".

The Task Force is scheduled to meet again on April 3, 1992 at Northeastern State University in Tahlequah.

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For More Information contact the Department of Pollution Control at (405) 271-4468.

1000 N.E. 10TH STREET, ROOM 1212 • P.O. BOX 53504 • OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA 73152
TELEPHONE NUMBER (405) 271-4468 • FAX (405) 235-0187



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